

Message Text

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PAGE 01 EDINBU 00177 241320Z

44

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-02

USIA-15 PRS-01 SP-02 /040 W
----- 050860

R 241242Z JUL 75

FM AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

TO AMEMBASSY LONDON

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 847

UNCLAS EDINBURGH 177

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: UK, PFOR

SUBJECT: VARYING VIEWS OF STATE OF SCOTTISH NATIONALISM

1. THE ATTENTION OF ANYONE INTERESTED IN FOLLOWING THE LATEST EPISODE IN THE "PERILS OF SCOTTISH NATIONALISM" IS INVITED TO THE FOLLOWING PRESS ACCOUNTS APPEARING ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER.

A) GEOFFREY SMITH IN THE LONDON TIMES JULY 18 PROVIDED A THOUGHTFUL ACCOUNT OF WHAT HE CALLED "THE NEW MOOD IN SCOTLAND OVER DEVOLUTION", IN WHICH HE OPINED THAT "THE SCOTTISH ISSUE NO LONGER PERVADES THE ATMOSPHERE", SINCE "THE FERENDUM AND OTHER ECONOMIC PERILS HAVE DIVERTED ATTENTION".

B) IF THIS OPINION HAS SUBSTANCE, IT MUST BE CONCENTRATED IN THE ATMOSPHERE SOUTH OF HERE. IN SCOTLAND, POLITICIANS AND EDITORIALISTS HAVE BEEN SEIZING THE ISSUE WITH RENEWED VIGOUR AND TRYING TO PULL IT IN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS WITH ANYTHING BUT INDIFFERENCE. FOR EXAMPLE, JOHN WARDEN IN THE GLASGOW HERALD JULY 21 DESCRIBES THE INTER AND INTRA-PARTY PUSH-ME-PULL-YOU OVER THE SCOTTISH ASSEMBLY AS AN ISSUE TEARING ALL PARTIES BUT THE NATIONALISTS ASUNDER. HIS ARTICLE POINTS TO THE CROSSFIRE BETWEEN THE "MAXIS" AND THE "MINIS" IN LABOUR AND CONSERVATIVE PARTIES, E.G., JIM SILLARS VERSUS TAM DALYELL, MALCOLM RIFKIND VERSUS IAN SPROAT. DALYELL AND SPROAT CURRENTLY ARGUE THAT SCOTLAND IS OVER-GOVERNED AND NEEDS NO ASSEMBLY.

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SILLARS AND RIFKIND ARGUE FOR MORE SELF-GOVERNMENT TO CORRECT

THE MESS. WARDEN ALLGES THAT "ALL THE ADVICE REACHING THE PRIME MINISTER AT THE MOMENT POINTS ON ONE DIRECTION -- LABOUR LOSING GROUND STEADILY TO THE SCOTTISH NATIONALISTS". (SIC).

C) THE SCOTSMAN LEAD EDITORIAL OF JULY 19 PUTS THESE DEVELOPMENTS INTO A TYPICALLY SCOTTISH PERSPECTIVE AND INTERPRETS THEM AS "EXCELLENT TONIC" FOR THE SNP "JUST WHEN THEIR FORTUNES SEEMED TO BE SLIGHTLY FALTERING". IT CONCLUDES BY ATTACKING THE LABOUR ARGUMENT THAT SCOTLAND ALREADY SUFFERS FROM ENOUGH BUREAUCRACY, TAXATION AND OVER-GOVERNMENT WITHOUT HAVING AN ASSEMBLY BY CLAIMING THAT "IT IS WESTMINSTER WHICH REORGANIZED SCOTTISH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND IT IS WESTMINSTER WHICH WATCHES IMPORTANTLY WHAT IS HAPPENEING. A SCOTTISH ASSEMBLY WOULD SURELY ATTEMPT TO SORT OUT THE MUDDLE IT INTERITS".

2. COMMENT: MY OWN GUESS FOR WHATEVER IT'S WORTH IS THAT THE STRENGTH OF THE SCOTTISH NATIONAL MOVEMENT WILL CONTINUE TO BE INVERSELY PROPORTIONAL TO THE ABILITY OF WESTMINSTER TO SOLVE ITS INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL PROBLEMS. SOBERING, WHAT?

3. CITED ARTICLES FOLLOW UNDER SEPARATE COVER.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: NATIONALISM, PRESS COMMENTS, SCOTLAND, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 24 JUL 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975EDINBU00177
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750255-0658
From: EDINBURGH
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750723/aaaaaubh.tel
Line Count: 83
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CollinP0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03 MAR 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <03 MAR 2003 by ThomasVJ>; APPROVED <18 MAR 2004 by CollinP0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: VARYING VIEWS OF STATE OF SCOTTISH NATIONALISM
TAGS: PFOR, UK
To: LONDON
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006